The resuscitation of Hebrew and its implications for language revitalization

Jorge E. Lemus
Universidad Don Bosco
jlemus@udb.edu.sv

Abstract

In this paper the author addresses the revival process undergone by the Hebrew language and compares it to revitalization processes, such as the ones undergone by Maori, Basque and Pipil. Even though, the historical, religious and ideological reasons that allowed the revival of Hebrew are not present elsewhere, many lessons can be learned for language revitalization by taking a closer look to the Hebrew revival process. Instead of the religious and ideological reasons present in the Hebrew case, the author proposes the recovery and appreciation of their cultural identity in cases of completely assimilated peoples as a *sine qua non* requirement for language revitalization.

Keywords: language revival/resuscitation, language revitalization, Hebrew, Ulpan, Pipil language, linguistic and cultural assimilation

Resumen

En este artículo el autor aborda el proceso de resucitación sufrido por la lengua hebrea y lo compara con otros procesos de revitalización lingüística como los experimentados por el maorí, el vasco y el pipil. Aunque las razones históricas, religiosas e ideológicas que permitieron la resucitación del hebreo no se encuentran en otras partes, hay muchas lecciones que aprender del caso hebreo para la revitalización lingüística si se estudia más a fondo. En lugar de las razones religiosas e ideológicas presentes en el caso hebreo, el autor propone como un requisito sine qua non para la revitalización lingüística la recuperación y valoración de la identidad cultural de pueblos que han sido completamente asimilados.

Palabras clave: resucitación lingüística, revitalización lingüística, hebreo, Ulpan, lengua pipil, asimilación lingüística y cultural

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Introduction

Ever since humans developed linguistic skills, their languages have been evolving, changing and adapting to new social and natural situations. Sometimes, they have failed to adapt and have, therefore, become extinct. This is a natural process. However, after the discovery and conquest of America and the subsequent expansion of the Western European powers around the world from the 18th Century on, the process of language extinction has been accelerated to levels that are threatening the linguistic diversity of the world. When a language becomes extinct, all the accumulated knowledge of the linguistic community that spoke the language is lost, especially because most of the minority endangered languages of the world have no literary tradition.

Some very prestigious languages like Latin, Classical Greek, and Sanskrit are dead languages because, even though there are plenty of written records of these languages, and some are still used for liturgical and scholarly purposes, they have no native speakers. That is, nobody learns these languages as a vernacular. There are no linguistic communities that use and pass these languages on to new generations. They are regarded as languages for the learned and erudite only.

Another language that was in the very same situation as Latin and Greek by the end of the 19th Century was Hebrew. Surprisingly, it is nowadays a healthy, living language spoken by millions of people. How did this happen? By understanding the process that revived or resuscitated Hebrew, we can learn some very important lessons that can be used in language revitalization programs. In this paper, I give a general overview of the Hebrew revival process and pinpoint what is applicable to help languages on the verge of dying to be revitalized. Some other processes of the Hebrew revival program are purely ideological and historical, unique to the Jews and the foundation of the modern state of Israel, and, therefore, not always applicable to other languages and peoples.

The process of becoming a dead language

Language is both an innate predisposition of humans and a social phenomenon. It is innate because we are all born with the mental capacity to acquire any language (Chomsky 1955, 1965), and it is social because, even if we are genetically programmed to acquire any language, we can never develop language skills unless we interact with other speakers. The case of wild children or abused children who are deprived of any linguistic stimulus proves that even though we all have the capacity to acquire a language, we don't do so if we don't interact with other speakers. Thus, we acquire the language(s) that we are exposed to during our childhood.

In a bilingual or multilingual environment, languages have social status. The language with a high status (H) is usually the language of the dominant culture, while the language with low status (L) belongs to the subordinated cultures. Usually, in modern societies, the language with a high status is used for education, religion, politics, and for official matters, whereas the language with low status is used at home and in the streets, and it usually does not have a literary tradition, such is the case of most Amerindian languages and other indigenous languages around the world. When the language with a low status stops being used at home and it is replaced in all its social functions by the dominant language, it, inevitably, dies out since it loses all practical applications for the new generations who prefer to speak the language with the high status instead.

Speaking the H language gives you a chance to study, work and, possibly, go up in the social ladder. In America, after the Conquest and Colonization, many Amerindian languages have been replaced in all their functions by Spanish or English or Portuguese or any other European language. As a result of this, hundreds of native languages have died out and the majority of the remaining languages are, at present, threatened with extinction.

The Hebrew language underwent this extinction process over a thousand years ago. The Jewish-Roman wars brought the Jewish people to the verge of extinction in the first and second centuries A.D. Most of the remaining Jews in Palestine were converted to Christianity during the Byzantine Empire (Hayes et al 1988). Obviously, the Hebrew language stopped being used as a vernacular and had no native speakers for almost two thousand years. It remained, however, used for liturgical and scholarly purposes, but it was nobody's native language. The knowledge of Hebrew people had was limited to the Hebrew language found in the Bible. Nevertheless, and in spite of being a "dead" language for centuries, Hebrew was successfully "resuscitated" as a living, spoken language in a matter of few generations. How did this happen? By understanding the Hebrew revival process we can help other languages on verge of dying to recover and become healthy, living languages again. I discuss this revival process in the following section.

History of a Revival Process

Even though Hebrew underwent a natural extinction process like many other languages, it remained used in Jewish communities for liturgical purposes and it had lots of written records, including the most important book of all: the Bible, which was to be read in Hebrew by the Jews. Nowadays, after undergoing a unique revival process in a matter of few generations, Hebrew is spoken as a native language by millions of Israelis and it is the second language of many thousands more around the world.

The revival of Hebrew began with waves of Jewish immigrants coming to Palestine between 1850 and 1880 (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991). They all brought different languages with them, depending on their place of origin. The ones coming from Eastern Europe, for example, spoke Yiddish, those coming from the Ottoman Empire spoke Judezmo (Ladino) and the ones coming from the Balkans, Africa or Asia spoke Arabic. All of these immigrants knew written, biblical Hebrew, which was part of their religious formation. Hebrew was even used for scientific and philosophical writings by an intellectual elite (the same way Latin was used in the Middle Ages). This particular use of the language gave it a high social status among the Jews from different linguistic backgrounds, turning it into an unspoken H language. It seems that, increasingly, from the 1880's on Hebrew was used as a *lingua franca* by many of the immigrants, regardless of their origin. Yiddish and Ladino, on the other hand, even though they were living, spoken languages, were regarded as L languages spoken by uneducated people (Rabin 1973, reference in Spolsky and Cooper 1991). There was no literary or philosophical tradition in these languages, and for many, those languages were the languages of the Diaspora.

Due to the importance of Hebrew as a lingua franca and as an important component of the religious identity of the Jews, it was taught as a second language in many schools. Every Jewish parent wanted their children to learn Hebrew (Spolsky and Cooper, 1991). At that time, a methodological revolution took place. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, a young Russian immigrant, revolutionized in 1883 the teaching of Hebrew by teaching Hebrew

in Hebrew, as suggested by Nissim Bechar, the school principal of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, following the then influential Berlitz method (Fellman 1973). Before Beh-Yehuda's times, Hebrew was taught in Arabic or Yiddish. Ben-Yehuda believed in the use of Hebrew as a vernacular. He himself raised his children speaking Hebrew at home. Many other Russian immigrants that came to Palestine after the killing of Tsar Alexander II in 1881 also believed that making Hebrew their national language would mark the distinction between life in Israel and life in the Diaspora.

Not everybody followed Ben-Yehuda's example and ideas, though. At the beginning, nobody listened to his proposal; the religious Jews favored the use of Hebrew as a sacred language and not as a vernacular. However, eventually, others followed Ben-Yehuda's example. By 1888, Hebrew was not only taught as a second language at school but it was used as the medium of instruction for general subjects in some schools. This created a significant number of youngsters fluent in Hebrew as their second language and who used it to communicate with each other (as a *lingua franca*) due to their different linguistic backgrounds (Fellman 1973). We can regard these historical events as the onset of the revival of Hebrew.

The logical consequence of using Hebrew as a *lingua franca* by the youngsters who went to school was the use of this language as a vernacular for other purposes outside the school environment. When interlinguistic marriages took place among these youngsters, the language they preferred to use at home was, most probably, Hebrew. If this was the case, their children grew up using this language as their first language, and, probably their parent's as a second.[1] Spolsky assumes that this change must have taken place between 1905 and 1915. Bachi (1956, cited in Spolsky and Cooper 1991) claims that in a 1916 census, 40% of the general Jewish population said Hebrew was their first language, while 75% of the youngsters claimed Hebrew as their mother tongue. These figures indicate that the revival of Hebrew took place in three generations. The first generation learned it as a religious, academic language, the second generation learned it at school as a second language, and the third generation learned it at home as a first language. With the first generation of native speakers of Hebrew, the future of the language was ensured[2].

With the foundation of the Hebrew University in 1925, Hebrew became a full-fledged scholar and vernacular language. It was modernized and adapted for uses other than religion. Scholars and the clergy agreed that biblical Hebrew was linguistically limited and that it had to be expanded and enriched with new, modern vocabulary and expressions, as any other natural language. After the Holocaust, and the subsequent foundation of the State of Israel, hundreds of thousands of non-Hebrew speaking Jews came to Israel. They soon adopted Hebrew as their language. Hebrew was seen as a unifying and identitary element for the Jewish people.

This process of generating native speakers of a given language in three generations is the usual process followed by immigrants in countries where the official language is different from their native tongues. In

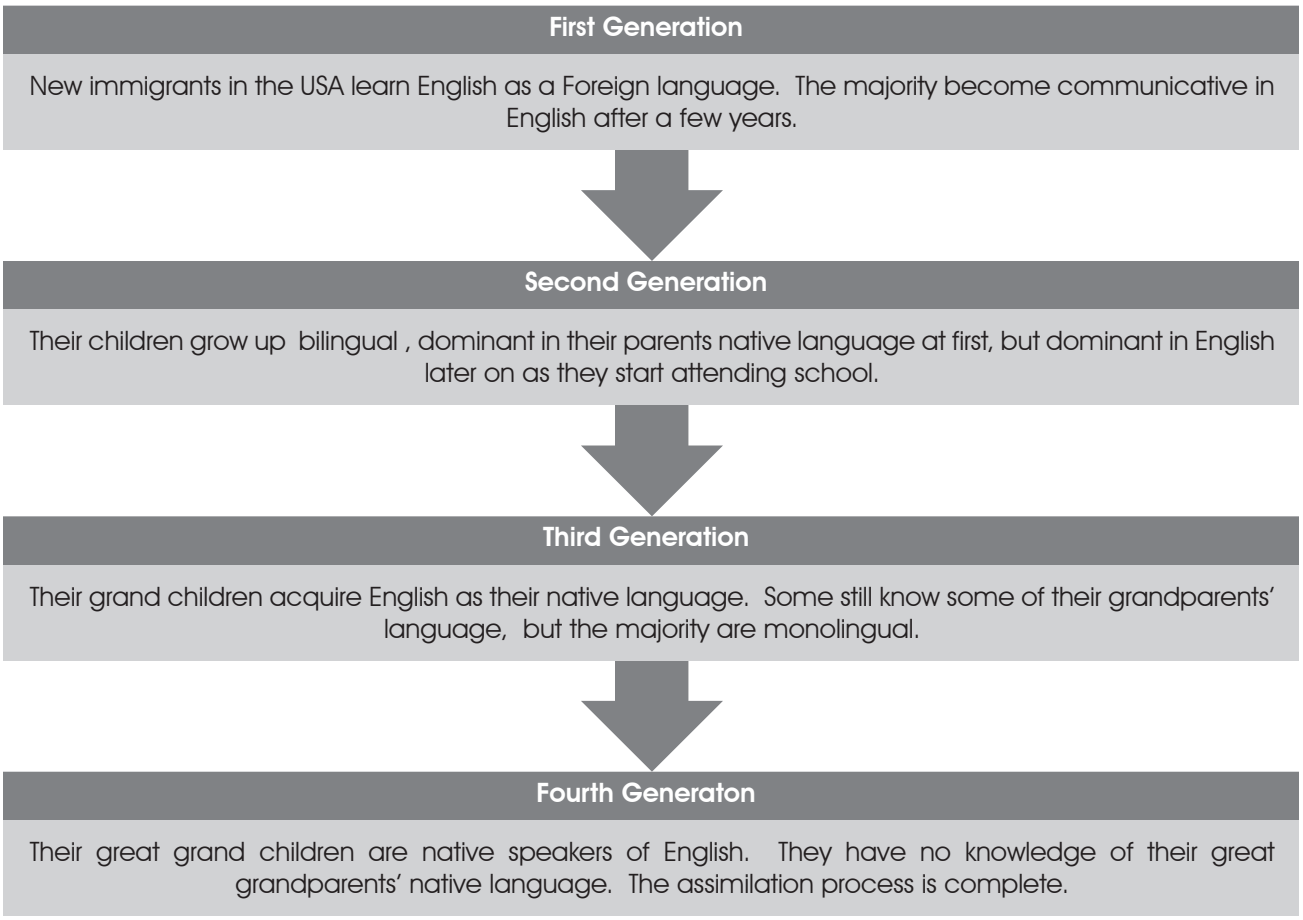
1 There are no written records that I know of, of studies carried out in those days that can confirm that this is what was really going on at the time. The high percentage of youngsters who claimed Hebrew as their native language (up to 70%, according to Bachi 1956), however, confirms that Hebrew was being used at home as a first language.

2 The birth of a Creole language roughly follows the same process before becoming a full language. It is first learned as a business language among people with different linguistic backgrounds. At this level, it is called a pidgin and it is made up mainly of vocabulary from the dominant language (H language) and a simplified grammar. If the contact period is short, the pidgin disappears. But, if it is a prolonged period of contact, the language evolves into a full language based on the dominant language and with components from the other languages in contact, like Papiamento (Spanish based), Haitian (French based) and Hawaiian (English based) creoles.

the following diagram, I describe the typical process of how English becomes the native language of new immigrants in the USA by the third generation:

Figure 1

Typical language assimilation process



The process described above is the natural linguistic assimilation process that takes place in cases of long lasting language contact. Salvadoran and other Hispanic immigrants in the USA are completely assimilated into the American Culture by the third generation or earlier (second). Crawford (1991), for example, describes how in the USA bilingualism was the norm during the 17th and 18th centuries but that, eventually, in the late 19th century, English became the dominant language and all new immigrants had to learn it. It took most immigrants two to three generations to be assimilated into what has been called the "melting pot". The diagram in Figure 1 shows that by the third generation, English is already the native language of the immigrants, and by the fourth generation (probably as early as the third), immigrants are assimilated not only linguistically but also culturally (unless they remain in a culturally cohesive community, in which case they would be bicultural). Usually, the second and third generations are in an ambivalent situation, culturally speaking, since they are taken neither as members of the dominant culture nor part of their parents' culture. This ambivalent situation is what forces

them to fully adopt the dominant culture and reject their parents' native culture[3]. This can be a painful process since being part of a culture is not only a personal decision but a decision of the social group. The second generation immigrants, for example, can feel 100% part of the dominant culture, but for the natives they will still be regarded as "foreigners".[4]

The Hebrew case, though, differs from other language and culture assimilation cases in two aspects. Linguistically, there were no native speakers of Hebrew when the process began[5]; that is, the new Jewish immigrants that came to Palestine found a nation where different languages were spoken. Nevertheless, the process of linguistic assimilation was artificially created in semi-immersion Hebrew programs at school (teaching Hebrew in Hebrew). The situation was not ideal, linguistically speaking, since the Hebrew teachers were not prepared for teaching Hebrew as they themselves did not know the language (Fellman 1973). This makes the revival of Hebrew a unique case in the linguistic history of the world.[6] Culturally, all the Jews around the world share many cultural traits regardless of their nationality or the language they speak because of their strong religious tradition. They also keep the native culture of the country they were born in. Therefore, their cultural assimilation differs from the one described above for immigrants in the United States of America. They are more easily assimilated and regarded, upon arrival, as Jewish by other Jewish people. They are rarely regarded as "foreigners" by other Jews.

In the process for the revival of Hebrew, apart from religion, a determining factor was ideology. Even those European Jews who strongly supported Yiddish as their language, adopted Hebrew for ideological reasons. They thought the language represented life in the Promised Land, while other languages such as Yiddish represented life in the Diaspora (Spolsky and Cooper 1991). After the Holocaust, the non-Hebrew speaking Jews who came to Israel were even more motivated to learn Hebrew to consolidate their identity as a people.

The above discussion makes it clear that, historically, there are two main reasons that favored the revival of Hebrew. The first reason is the multilingual environment of Palestine and the need for a lingua franca for communication in the late 1800's. None of the languages spoken in Palestine at the time had a high status and choosing one of those languages as a common language would have favored one ethnic group over another. Choosing Hebrew, on the other hand, nobody's native language at the time, and a language with a high religious status, was like choosing a neutral language that would not favor any of the local linguistic

3 Most first generation Salvadoran immigrants in the USA hold dearly to their native culture while adopting the new American culture. They long to return home, to their country. Many first generation Salvadorans refuse to obtain American citizenship because they feel that by doing so they would be betraying their country. The second generation Salvadorans, don't feel the same way. Their home is the USA, but they are still regarded as foreigners in their own adoptive land. Many of them are deported to El Salvador, where they do not belong, neither linguistically nor culturally.

4 This fear of the immigrants not becoming part of the dominant culture is what has, historically, motivated serious conflicts in cases of cultural contact. In the USA, this fear has motivated a movement to make English the official language of the country. As Figure 1 shows, making English the official language is useless and unnecessary since English will always be the native language of the second and third generation immigrants. Only the first generation will speak it as a foreign language.

5 Nowadays, the new immigrants follow the same language assimilation process as do immigrants in other nations.

6 To the best of my knowledge, there is no other language that has undergone the same revival process under the same circumstances as Hebrew. Other attempts have been made to revitalize languages such as Irish and Maori that had a relatively high number of native speakers. The case of Pipil in El Salvador (Lemus 2008), with a very small number of speakers (less than 200) and with teachers with no knowledge of Pipil, can be compared to the situation faced by the first Hebrew teachers (with little or no knowledge of the language) at the onset of the Hebrew revival process.

groups.[7] The second reason is the ideological effect of having Hebrew as a binding force for the Jewish people. This explains why even the orthodox Yiddish speaking Jews, favored Hebrew as a lingua franca, something they opposed at the beginning.

The Ulpan: Keeping the language alive

The Ulpan is one of the most successful adult education programs of Israel. The program was designed to teach the basics of Hebrew to the new immigrants after the foundation of the State of Israel. The success of the program lies in its intensity (5 hours a day during 5 months), the motivation of the students (new immigrants who want to make a living in Israel and become part of the Israeli society), and the contents of the program (the program includes practical Hebrew, and a very strong religious component).

When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, Jewish from all over the world, with different linguistic backgrounds, immigrated to Israel. Most of them had their own professions and trades and they needed to know Hebrew to be absorbed by the new Jewish society. The Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture and the Jewish Agency started a program to teach the new immigrants the basics of Hebrew so they could function in society. In 1949, the first Ulpan, Ulpan Etzion, was opened in Jerusalem (Weinberg et al. 1994). The program was a success from the beginning, and soon other Ulpanim (plural of Ulpan in Hebrew) opened all over Israel.

The key for the success of the Ulpan stems, apart from its curricular design and the motivation of the students, from the support of the government for the students.[8] After 500 hours of instruction, the students already know the basics of Hebrew and the basics of the Jewish religion, an important component of the course. Religion is the binding force of the Jewish society. That is why it is very important that the new immigrants are indoctrinated in Judaism, so they feel more like a nation regardless of their country of origin.

Being a new nation formed by immigrants of so many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the Israelis have supported the idea of a *Melting Pot* from the very beginning. The Ulpan seems to be in harmony with this old idea by trying to insert new immigrants to the Israeli society. Many minorities, though, have suffered discrimination, inferiority complex and loss of identity when they find out that their culture is either patronized or openly denied any cultural value. The relatively new State of Israel is following the footsteps of the Americans at the turn of last century for the waves of European immigrants in this respect. Israel wants to develop a homogenous society in which everybody goes by the dominant culture and religion. All illiterate immigrants are taught to read and write in Hebrew, a foreign language to them. By doing this, their cultural values and language are disregarded and the Jewish values and language imposed on them.[9]

According to the identification of the new immigrants to their native countries, we can classify them in two categories: those who chose to be in Israel as a personal decision, and those who fled their native countries because of war or ethnic/religious persecution. The former, who are usually highly educated or successful

7 Many new independent nations in Africa and Asia have adopted an international language (e.g., English, French, and Spanish) different from the local languages as their official language (see Crystal 1997). The purpose of this decision is twofold: on the one hand, speaking an international language allows them to be in touch with the world; and on the other, it does not favor any local language, preventing, in this manner, possible conflicts among the different ethnic groups.

8 Students don't have to work while attending the Ulpan program. They are supported by the State for 5 or 6 months of Ulpan. Non-immigrant students can also register at the Ulpan program at a cost, like in any other language course.

9 To be taught to read and write in one's native language is both a human right and a psycho-pedagogical reality.

entrepreneurs, are easily absorbed by the Israeli society. In time, they not only become bilingual thanks to ULPAN and exposure to the language, but they also become bicultural, contributing to the multicultural environment of Israel's multiethnic society. Even after 25 years or more of being in Israel, these immigrants still introduce themselves as from Argentina, South Africa, the USA, Cuba, etc.[10] They have family or business ties with their native countries and when they have any opportunity of visiting their native land, they do it with pleasure. This implies that in terms of religion they feel Israelis (Jewish) but in terms of nationality they feel (minimally) binational. The latter group is in a very different situation. The members of this group, on the one hand, reject their nationality because it brings them bad remembrances of abuse and intolerance in their native countries but, on the other, they keep their culture and are, therefore, not easily absorbed by Israeli culture, such is the case of the Ethiopians. It seems to me that the ULPAN was designed for the former but not for the latter.

The above discussion brings out the question of culture. How is culture acquired? How do you become a member of the social group? Anthropologically speaking, a culture is acquired the same way we acquire our first language: by being exposed to it from childhood. When growing up, we are exposed to one or more languages and we learn to isolate sounds, to combine sounds to form words, words to make sentences, etc. The culture of our society is also acquired in the same way. We are exposed to it from birth, and it becomes part of our integral being. We learn the rules of behavior in different social contexts, we learn how to address different people in different ways, we learn about holidays, national foods, etc. We also learn to identify other people as members of our culture. If someone doesn't behave as expected by our cultural rules, we immediately categorize him/her as foreign to our social group. Overt cultural values can be taught at school, but covert (intrinsic) cultural values are assimilated only through exposure. The very members of the cultural group are not aware of these intrinsic cultural values. They only know that someone's behavior is not right, but they don't know why.

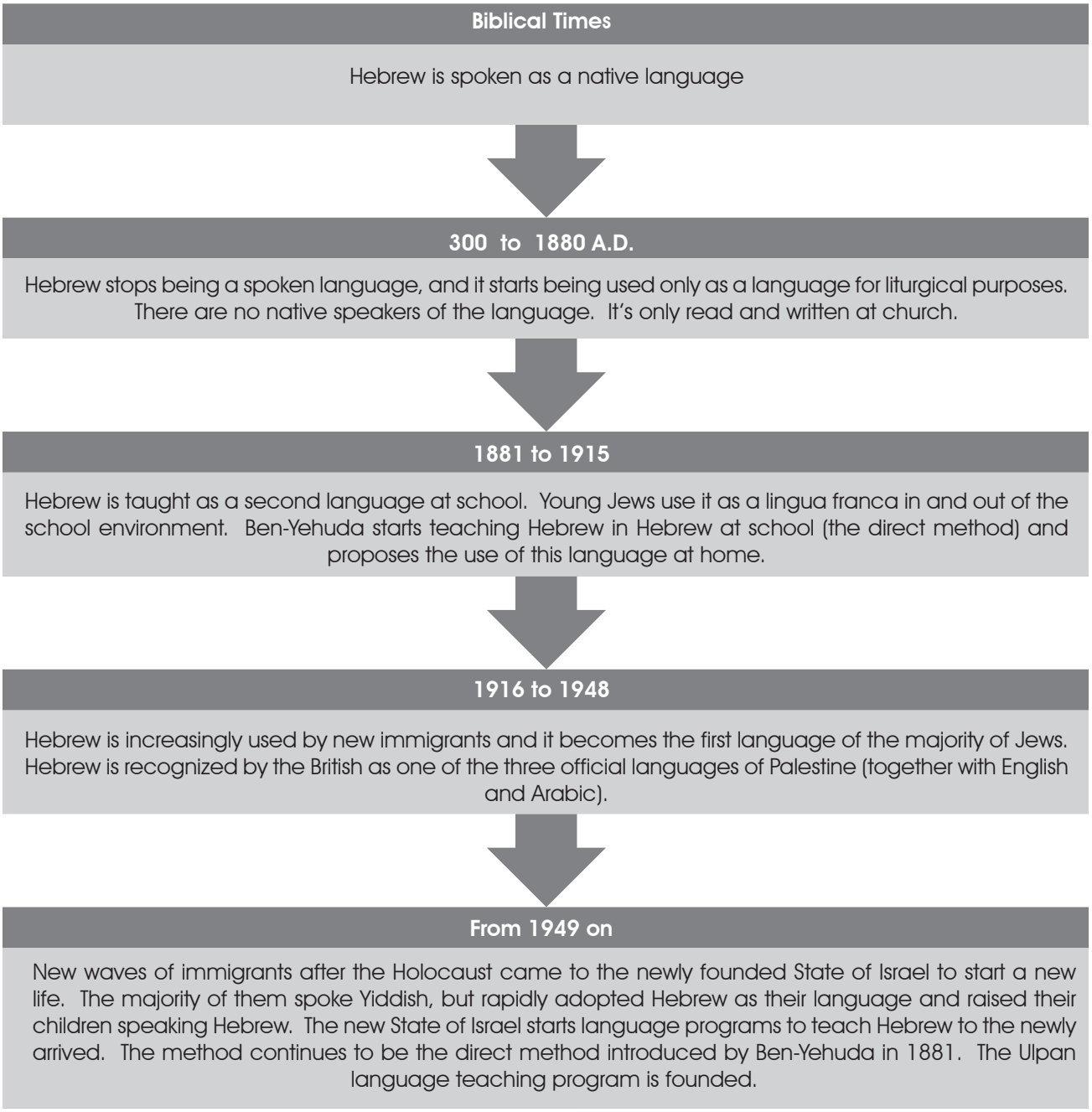
The ULPAN is designed mainly to teach the Hebrew language to new immigrants and to introduce them to the Israeli culture. Dividing the linguistic and the cultural aspect of the Ulpan, which one has the greatest impact on the immigrants? It is very important for the assimilation process of the newcomers to learn some of the overt cultural values of Israeli society in order to function properly in the society (i.e., to know what to do, when to do it and how to do it). However, their native cultural values, the ones they grew up with, as their native language, are never forgotten nor entirely replaced by the new values. The assimilation process may take years, and it may never be complete for the first generation of immigrants. Their children will definitely be Israelis, though with some of the native cultural values of their parents percolated into their own culture, becoming kind of bicultural (and hopefully, bilingual).

The Hebrew revival process, of which the Ulpan is a key component, can be summarized as in the following diagram:

10 This is a personal observation I made during my stay in Israel in 1998.

Figure 2

Hebrew Revival Process



Language revitalization and language resuscitation: the importance of cultural identity

At present, most efforts by linguists and anthropologists are oriented towards language revitalization and documentation. Nobody is working on or really concerned about resuscitating a dead language. Hebrew will probably be for a very long time the only language successfully brought back life. The process of reviving Hebrew, however, includes important components that can be applied to revitalize endangered languages.

A language is regarded as "endangered" when it is no longer transmitted to the new generations. If, in a bilingual community, we find bilingual adults who speak both the H(igh) and the L(ow) languages, but children who only speak the H language, the L language is doomed to extinction unless a revitalization process is started. Many languages around the world are only spoken by the grandparent generation. These languages are regarded as severely endangered and urgent measures have to be taken to prevent them from extinction.

Many other languages have, unfortunately, no native speakers left and have, therefore, passed from being severely endangered to being extinct. The grandparent or great grandparent generation may remember words and phrases in the dead language that they heard and learned as children. When this is the case, the only possibility is to document what is left of the language: oral tradition, and, sometimes, written texts, dictionaries and grammars usually written by amateur linguists. Throughout history, many languages have died out without leaving any trace of their existence. Documenting a dead or a dying language is of paramount importance for humankind to preserve its collective knowledge.

The success of the Hebrew revival process stems from the need of the Jewish people to become a nation. Ideology[11], cultural and religious identity have all played a key role in allowing Hebrew to be resuscitated. There is no other recorded case in history of a successful language revival process. In Ben-Yehuda's own words:

> *There is no nation without a country, a language or state. The Jews have a land, the Land of Israel; they have a language—the Hebrew language. The land and the language will be the foundation of their state*. (Eliezer Ben-Yehuda 1879, cited by Safran 2005)

The most important lesson to be learned from the resuscitation of Hebrew is that no language can be revitalized or revived unless its speakers feel it is an important component of their cultural identity. In Spain, the Basque language was successfully revitalized because there were plenty of Basques who regarded their dying language as a symbol of their nationhood and independence from the Franco regime. With the return of the monarchy and democracy to Spain, many communities who were linguistic minorities felt the need to protect and demonstrate their ethnic identity. A similar situation happened in New Zealand. The Maori people felt that by losing their language, which was no longer spoken by the children, they would lose their culture and identity as a people. The revitalization efforts came from the communities themselves, where they started their famous *kōhanga* reo or language nests, when they realized their language and culture were rapidly heading towards extinction since their children were no longer learning Maori at home because their parents did not speak to them in Maori but in English.

The culture of a people is intimately related to their language; thus, the loss of one's language poses an immediate threat to the group's identity. Many indigenous groups do not recognize people from the community as indigenous when they stop using the vernacular language and start using the majority language. According to the Guatemalan Quiche poet Humberto Ak'abal[12], in some Guatemalan indigenous communities, the natives who learn Spanish, even if they continue using the vernacular language, are regarded as "ladinos"

11 Ideology is an important element for keeping the unity of thought of a particular group. It serves to defend the group's interests, to explain facts, to differentiate between what is true and what is false, and to justify social values to determine what is good and what is bad.
12 Personal communication

by the community, and asked to leave the village. The experience of other peoples indicates that losing one's cultural identity leads inevitably to the loss of one's native language and the adoption of the dominant language and culture. Therefore, the first step to take in any language revitalization process is to regard the language as a symbol of the people's identity.

Using the native language identifies us as members of a particular ethnic/social group. It has been pointed out by several researchers (Fishman 1991, Wardaugh 1986, Hornberger 1989, 2000) that one of the first demands made by minority groups anywhere in the world is the right to use their language in all social contexts. Identifying a people by their language is easier than identifying them by other cultural traits, which may be difficult to discriminate due to normal processes of syncretism that take place after long periods of language and cultural contact.

Conclusion

The Hebrew resuscitation process took several generations to be accomplished and it has become a living example of how a dead language can be brought back to life when the people and the State regard it as essential for building a nation. Without Hebrew, Israel would probably not be what it is today: a nation in its own right. Ideology, culture and religion, all played an important role in the revival process. The political and religious conditions found in Israel, though, are not found elsewhere. Most endangered languages are spoken by very small communities who have, in most cases, adopted the mainstream culture and language, and have abandoned their ancestral culture, which is usually regarded as a symbol of underdevelopment and ignorance. In America, most Amerindian languages are not literary languages and are not used for formal education or for legal or commercial purposes.[13]

Using the native language identifies us as members of a particular ethnic/social group. It has been pointed out by several researchers (Fishman 1991, Crystal 1997) that one of the first demands made by minority groups looking for social and political recognition anywhere in the world is the right to use their language in all social contexts. In the case of languages that have not only lost most or all of the social contexts where they can be used, but also their cultural identity, major efforts need to be made in order to bring back their sense of belonging and to recover their lost identity. The process of recovering their identity inevitably includes the recovery of their language, which then becomes central to their fight for recognition as a people.

To recover the lost cultural identity of a people is an extremely difficult task, especially when all the tangible cultural links to their ancestry have bee n lost. To cope with this problem, the revitalization process requires that all actions taken include positive examples of the native culture, emphasizing their contribution to society at different levels. That is, schoolchildren need role models from their community and ethnic group. Their customs must be revalued and/or revived, if they are no longer practiced. To achieve these goals, voluntary work may be sufficient at the beginning (as in the case of the language nests of the Maori), but not enough to complete the process. Revitalizing a language requires language planning and linguistic legislation. If the state does not get directly involved in the process, the results will be minimal and localized.

13 Guarani and Quechua in South America may be the only exceptions.

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